

The Emperor may not be Resisted.

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Scripture," wrote he once more on the 6th March 1630, in answer to the elector's question, whether the princes might take arms against the emperor in defence of the faith, " that any Christian rebel against his overlord, whether he do right or wrong. The Christian must suffer violence and wrong, especially from his supreme lord. For although the emperor should do injustice and act contrary to his duty and his oath, his authority and the obedience of his subjects are not thereby nullified as long as the empire and the electors recognise him as emperor and do not depose him." The right of resistance on such grounds to a reigning prince once granted, any individual might claim the right to refuse obedience to established authority, whether imperial or princely, and all government would be at an end. He admits, indeed, that the representatives of the empire may depose the emperor on sufficient grounds, but as long as he occupies the imperial throne, even if he were a heathen, rebellion is inadmissible. And what holds of the emperor holds of the princes. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, honour the king, is for Luther an all-sufficient answer to the contrary. To the contention that it is lawful to repel force with force he only replies that no man shall be judge in his own cause. The princes are not, indeed, bound to proscribe their subjects at the imperial command. They are bound in such a case to obey God rather than man. But they shall not resist the persecutor; they shall allow him to rage at will, while not approving, assisting his action. They shall trust in God, who is faithful and will find the means to protect His own. The devil would indeed fain deluge the whole land with blood for the sake of religion, but God will preserve us from the devil's wiles.

The crushing conclusion of the theological debate at Augsburg disillusioned even Luther. Within six months the Protestants must renounce their creed, or submit to be treated as heretics and outlaws. In prospect of such a contingency Luther's warrior spirit got the better of his naive faith in God. Once more he is engaged in mortal combat with Antichrist, and even if Antichrist wears the crown of the Holy Roman Empire he shall be defied. " If war must come," wrote he to Justin Jonas on the 20th September, "so let it come. We have prayed and worked long enough," This